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Global English and World Englishes Paradigms in a Japanese classroom

Jack BRODOWSKI

日本の教室でグローバル英語とワールドイングリッシーズの範例

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Abstract： The global prevalence of English language is interpreted through two conflicting views: one being a Global English paradigm which, it is said, oppresses non-native English speakers (Phillipson, 1992); and the other, the World Englishes paradigm, in which speakers liberate themselves from binding linguistic norms by adhering to their own culture and mother language creating a version of heteroglossic, or pluralized English language (Kachru, 1992: 11). A boon in settling the arguments between former and the latter is a description of the context in which English language teaching and English language learning is carried out. The particular context of EFL from which I will describe my observations, takes place in secondary education. I am convinced that in the context of my work I have found some evidence showing that, although Japanese curriculum focuses on acrolectal forms, that is learning English for external communication using external standards of formal language (Yano, 2001: 123); in an instance of curriculum change, when the focus changes to basilectal forms, meaning less prestigious language, the indigenization of English takes place. Given this, I will show how formal (EFL) education can display characteristics of the two paradigms affecting one context simultaneously. The interplay between Global English and World Englishes paradigms results in a merger, creating a dual-existence view in the classroom. As an aid to this description, an English language relation with Japanese society, as well as current issues in EFL will be provided. A discussion about what can be done in this intricate context will follow. In addition, this paper intends to underpin the notion of the English language having the ability to carry and maintain a different culture (Mahboob, 2009: 183), thereby undermining the claims of the existence of linguistic imperialism in the expanding circle. Finally, a short description of the curriculum and a small sample of students' creative work will be provided to support my conclusions.

Key words： Global English, World Englishes, classroom observation

1. The Context

To describe the diffusion of the English language globally, Kachru (1985) offers a conceptual model of concentric circles, dividing English language using countries into inner, outer and expanding circles.

Although in recent times the validity of this model has been debated with the border between inner and outer circle diminishing (Yano, 2001: 122), the model categorizes Japan as an expanding circle. This means that the English language has no official status in Japan. Accordingly, learning of English as a foreign language is directed mainly at international communication with speakers from the inner circles who don't speak Japanese (Yano, 2001: 124). A strong insistence on English proficiency in a society that doesn't have any immediate need for it creates a perplexing educational context. Despite the efforts of educators and learners, on the whole there exists an inability to communicate in the English language. Some educators relate this inability to the presence of "juken eigo," an English language education directed towards the entrance examinations for junior and senior high schools, and universities. This type of education focuses on the quantitative elements of language consisting of knowledge of acrolectal forms. This affects English language communication rendering a society able to somewhat write and read, but unable to converse.

Looking briefly at the history of Japan, after World War Two, the US occupied Japan during which time it reformed the political, economic and educational spheres (Buruma, 2003). In 1952, the United States relinquished control of Japan, granting its sovereignty, but remained as a military force up to the present day. Following this, the Japanese government has made it a priority to educate its citizens to communicate in English. In 1987, the Ministry of Education offered jobs to English native speakers from the inner circle countries to participate in the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), an initiative to improve foreign language education in Japan (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006). The number of participants from the US was, and still is by far the highest of all inner circle countries, followed by Canada and then Britain (JET, 2012). As a participant on the JET Programme for three years, I was able to observe the shortcomings of the initiative from an emic perspective.

The next section will tie the Japanese context to some of the issues in English language education.

2. Global English Paradigm

In the post occupation context, the Japanese government has tried to instill mostly the US variety of English language in education which conforms to what Kirkpatric (2006) states that the choice of English norm is often based on political and ideological grounds rather than educational ones. Unlike the socioeconomic context in the outer circle country of India, in which "widespread

acceptance of the need of English is backed by the economic notion of English as capital" (Bhatt, 2005: 35), the impetus for learning English in Japan is governmental education policy (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006). This is not always approved by learners who, oblivious to military might and economic power relations with the US, seem well on their way of ignoring English language learning for extrinsic reasons. On the recent English language situation in education in Japan, Yoshida (2008) comments:

> "The teaching of foreign languages (especially English) in Japan has been a topic of concern for many years. The Japanese study English as their main foreign language for three years in junior high school, another three years in senior high school, and in the case of many people, at least another two years in university. Yet, when the results of the TOEFL are published by ETS every two years, they seem simply to show the inefficiency and 'failure' of Japanese English education—not once, until 1999, had the Japanese TOEFL average surpassed the 500 mark in the PBT (Paper-based test). Worse still, in terms of ranking in comparison with other Asian countries, the Japanese now find themselves last among the examinees from the 28 Asian countries who took the iBT (Internet-based Test) in the years 2005-2006. It was also found that the Japanese had the lowest average score in Speaking among the examinees from the 147 countries that took the iBT that year" (2008: 1)

Yoshida relates low scores phenomena to junior high school curriculum design and, in particular, to the instruction time the learners are exposed to per week. However, I believe that this phenomena relates to learners' resistance to prescribed language which, in acrolectal forms, is unnecessary in an expanding circle context. In one of the Ten Sociolinguistic Axioms, Patrick (2004) states that educational institutions' goals are to reproduce the *status quo* through the setting of autocratic language standards as a gate-keeping device. The choice of an exonormative native speaker model is seen as a consequence of linguistic imperialism rather than a genuinely "free" choice (Kirkpatrick, 2006: 71). These gate-keeping devices called linguistic sanctions (Phillipson 2008) in form of *juken eigo* examinations produce language users

who can write and read, but are very limited in communicative proficiency. As stated above, Japanese English language education targets international communication based mainly on US acrolectal norms. Yano (2001) points out that EFL does not offer basilectal use of English. It offers a prescriptive acrolect which focuses on correctness and the promotion of one alternative as right, causing damage and insecurity in users of English who can not negotiate meaning in basilectal interactions (Gupta, 2010: 64, 84). Kachru and Nelson (1996) point out that learning a language from a book is not what it takes to speak a language and they also add, contrary to Yoshida's findings, test results do not reflect usage norms and they don't indicate proficiency.

Another element that undermines English education is the circumstance in which English is taught by non-native speakers to non-native learners both of whom have rare chances to interact with inner circle native speakers. This leads to a lack of motivation to pursue proficiency of any form, whether acrolectal or basilectal, and furthermore causes insecurity in the non-native teacher as an authority in the English language. Perhaps the existence of such a scenario called for the development of schemes like the JET programme and team-teaching, whereby native and non-native teachers teach together in a classroom setting. The use of English native speakers in the classroom serves Japanese language teachers and learners as a reference to correctness, which in turn, further maintains the lack of security and a need for prescriptivism (Kachru and Nelson, 1996: 83). Yet another issue is that of being labeled native speaker which carries a perception of authority; however, this authority is meaningless when looked at the complexity of the context to which monolingual English speakers bring unrelated linguistic forms to the local sociocultural community. Often times, as Gupta (2010) explains, the native speaker is not a reliable source of judgement about the standard of English taught in Japanese classrooms. Kachru and Nelson (1996) add that according to research the native speakers are among the least intelligible speakers in the non-inner circle context. “Applying one code regardless who the speakers are is not flexible and resourceful way” (Jenkins, 2009: 47). The extent of the native English teachers contribution to Japanese language education is a provision of “comparative fallacy”, a term stating that multilingual speakers competence is referenced to monolingual speakers and their variety (Bhatt, 2005: 30). This uncovers another issue which is the issue of language ownership. Who owns English? The Japanese government believes that the inner circle does, with the US variety being placed on a pedestal.

The section below will explain Japanese students' creative work which indicates student's partial complicity to maven's norms, as well as an attempt at ownership of English language through their creativity in use.

3. Curriculum Design

Seeing the effect of “test English” on Japanese secondary education, I started to wonder how students can retain the linguistic forms that are learned for the tests, but which are soon forgotten following examination periods. It is often the case that students who, after studying English for 6 years in secondary education, can't grasp the usage of copula verbs. Students' lack of ability, demotivation and resistance to analyze complex forms promoted a closer examination of curriculum design. I decided, while having the autonomy, to separate myself, the native English teacher, from teaching acrolects for the tests. The goal was to make the students speak basilectal English on their own terms.

In a way, we can say that all teachers in any educational institution are a type of order takers with very little room for deviation from the official curriculum, or in case of English language, *expert discourses* (Bhatt, 2005) that declare what should be taught. There is a little freedom when looking at the standard tests; the attainable standards are set firmly in place and they serve as a guide to what one can do in a classroom. In the realms of ELT and ELL, we are told to maintain the linguistic forms of the inner circle, but reality presents contexts that needs particular considerations for design. By not being an “order taker” in the Japanese education system, yet being a representative of an inner circle country, for instructional approach to match the needs of learners with various aptitudes and very limited chance for the use of gained knowledge, I was able to design a context specific curriculum.

First, I examined the learning style that Japanese students are generally good at, rote learning. In over a decade of experience in Japanese classrooms, I have noticed that Japanese students usually excel in this type of learning. In addition, I also looked to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978) whose work concludes that cognitive development, including language development, arises as a result of social interactions. Vygotsky considered thoughts as essentially internalized speech, and the inception of speech was in social interaction. That is why, by emulating a natural English social interaction, natural acquisition should take place. Natural acquisition, according to Lightbown and Spada (2006), is defined as language to

which the learner is exposed to in social interactions, work and school situations, and the speakers in those situations are native speakers and the interaction is not targeted towards learners. Keeping this in mind, I designed a curriculum where students were exposed to natural acquisition, but in situations targeting non-native learners. “Conversational interaction is an essential, if not, sufficient condition for second language acquisition” (Lightbown and Spada, 2006: 43). For detailed information on what makes up a conversation, Thornbury and Slade (2006) offer a seminal book called “Conversation: From Description to Pedagogy”. In it, the authors reveal the innate characteristics that make up conversations. Some of the prominent ones that, in context of my work, seemed usable were *routines, lexical phrases* and *formulaic language* (Thornbury and Slade, 2006: 62, 218). “Native-like fluency is possible only because speakers have memorized literally thousands of lexicalized multi-word units and pre-assembled, formulaic patterns” (Pawley and Syder, 1983). This according to the authors cuts processing time in real-time conversations, eliminating analysis of what should be said and how it should be said.

So how does this blend in the classroom? The design of the curriculum consisted of selecting pragmatically functional phrases for the context. For example: “What's up?”, “What's the difference?”, “That's impossible” are given to the students who, in a pair, write a dialog using a set number of those phases in conjunction with their own originally developed content clauses. In a blend of both, students create a conversation for which themes are provided. These themes closely resemble social interactions most commonly encountered in informal settings. When the role plays are written, they are checked for the deviance from the norm, with an element of tolerance, then the students memorize the conversations, followed by a performance in front of the class. Each unit of formulaic phrases, explanation of use and the role-play performance takes two classes to complete. This type of curriculum presents a shift from teacher-focused to learner-focused classes giving the learners a free hand in designing a realistic conversation. It should be mentioned that the types of conversations the students make are very limited in content and are rather light in nature, consisting mostly of *transactional* and *interactional* turn-taking (Thornbury and Slade, 2006). Although all pairs create the same thematic conversations, each pair's conversation is distinct because of their own creativity and choice of words. In a thirty student class, this exposes students to fifteen different conversations with the same context providing ample exposure to familiar phrases. This is called comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). Building on Krashen's theory, Long

(1983) states that learners need modified interaction in which not simple linguistic forms, but interaction with other speakers through which comprehension can be negotiated serves language learning. This is what Swain (2000) calls 'collaborative dialogue'; through discussion learners test their own hypothesis about correct forms of use. It is considered a place where language use and language acquisition can co-occur. Students acquire functional language through rote learning while the rest of the students, watching the role plays, engage in tacit learning. The main goal is for the students to acquire lexical phrases and formulaic language forms. One of Krashen's (1982) monitor model hypotheses argues that *acquisition* and *learning* are contrasting terms. *Acquisition* is much the same as the exposure to our first language without conscious thought about linguistic forms, and *learning*, on the other hand, is the use of conscious attention to linguistic forms and rules and this is what prohibits conversation. The teacher's role in this setting is the provision of scaffolding during the creation of the role plays and the marking of the presentations based on memorization and expression, and not on the attention to linguistic norms.

This type of curriculum has produced positive results. Also worth mentioning is the fact that, in use for about two years now, this curriculum has became popular among learners. Students show a willingness to use basilectal forms to create English conversations with their own imprint on them. In addition, improvements in students' communicative competence during international interactions have also been noticed.

4. The Interplay of World Englishes in a Global English Paradigm

"For the purpose of rational analysis, descriptive characterizations of language provide the most positive opportunities for cogent insight in to the way language actually works as opposed to prescriptive declarations of the way one or another group or individual wishes language to work" (Kachru and Nelson, 1996: 77).

As stated above, discourse pragmatics revealed some interesting speech features in the role plays. Appendixes *A*, *B*, *C* and *D* contain samples of transcribed conversations. Discourse analysis of the role plays revealed the presence of a sociolinguistic speech community (Kachru and Nelson, 1996: 82) masked in the English language. Appendix *A* contains a sample of a conversation with a phrase "That was good," located in bold font. Here speaker B declares an appraisal of feelings through a positive affect (Martin and

Rose 2008: 63). With this, speaker B separates the English pragmatical function of the phrase and uses it to respond to speaker A, who overturns the negative affect of speaker B insecurity expressed with "But I have never eaten ramen," by a positive affect of confidence with a phrase "No problem." The presence of a sociolinguistic speech community is seen with the use of formulaic phrase "That was good." In Japanese sociolinguistic speech patterns, in such instances speakers often use the expression *Yokatta,* which is a direct translation of "That was good." Japanese speakers use copula is in the past tense form, not in the present as the norm dictates.

Another example of a sociolinguistic speech community in the role plays is the presence of the marked or implied word "together." It is underlined in Appendixes *A*, *B*, *C*, *D*. "Together" clearly underlines solidarity and group cohesion which is a characteristic highly valued in Japanese culture. Burridge (2010) sees this as the transparency of English language by stating that vocabulary, as a link to culture, reveals insights into a speech community's values. Also noticed in the role plays, however, not demonstrated in the appendixes, is the students' deictic use of English. This also agrees with how Japanese people converse in their first language often omitting the subject of a clause.

In these role plays students have shown that by being provided with basilectal linguistic forms from the top, they have the propensity to form their own variety of English from the bottom. Bhatt (2005) calls this a linguistic hybridity.

> "The transformation of English in postcolonial contexts – from a colonial idiom to various indigenous ones - was inevitable for it to represent faithfully the ethos of its cultural context of use, and to enable speakers of English in multilingual contexts to use it as an additional resource of linguistic, sociolinguistic and literary creativity" (Bhatt, 2005: 25)

The small scale and limited nature of the Japanese-English sample I described above might not compare to the large scale of Indian Englishes (plural for there exists a few varieties of English in India), yet there is not a hint of a dogmatic following of exonormative forms, thus suggesting the existence of some properties necessary to form a new English variety. Canagarajah underscores this with a statement "The learners

liberate themselves through adoption of creative communicative strategies and use of English in their own terms regardless of the educational institutions' gate-keeping devices" (Canagarajah 2000, pp. 130-131).

5. Implications and a discussion of the paradigms

My curriculum choice in the expanding circle demonstrates maybe what is a start of the motion of linguistic liberation that will never gain the momentum of becoming a language with wide *range* and *depth* (Kachru and Nelson, 1996) of use in society. According to Yano (2001) in the Japanese context English will remain a foreign language and it will serve as means to communicate in an international arena with non-Japanese actors. It will never become a part of the Japanese speech community and it will not reach the status of a distinctive variety of English as established and recognizable on a global scale. However, my observations in my classroom lead me to believe that if there was a chance, whether through a long lasting presence of colonial linguistic influence or being economic in nature, Japan, just like Hong Kong (Bolton, 2000) and Singapore (Gupta, 2010), would have the inventive creativity to nativize English in its own way.

For now, governmental hegemony dictates the standard in education, and with its recent recognition of the lack of communicative ability there are some visible ripples in decision making by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. As a result since 2011 English education has been taught in primary education. Moreover, secondary education is not left without changes with Japanese high school teachers having to teach English classes all in English. The movement in the direction of improvement of language learning and teaching is there, however the movement in the direction of the type of English needed to satisfy the world's international or cross-national linguistic common core (Phillipson, 2009) is still lacking results. Shaking off the US norms in education is an impossibility when looking at the strength of the relationship and the reliance between the two countries; any attempts at reforms like the introduction of an attractive scheme of English as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2009), or any other simplified forms for international use will most likely fail as long as the government's interest is in the maintenance of the interim relation. There will be a costly reliance on the inner circle help in form of native speakers working in Japan and maintaining the expert discourses and delivering insecurity in Japanese society.

My classroom observations demonstrate that both views on the spread of English language, a Global English and World Englishes are intertwined into unequal, yet co-existing, paradigm. Looking closer, a

large scale view of the Global English paradigm in Japan contains a small scale view of World Englishes. In Bhatt's (2005) words we can say that English linguistic imperialism has caused the existence of a hybrid sociolinguistic reality in a post occupied context. Students' actions with language have demonstrated a bilingual creativity which is, according to Bhatt, a linguistic, cultural and social characteristic demonstrated through speech acts which contain variety of culturally defined interactions. Using the top-bottom relationship example in the World Englishes view, it is shown that only one small part of that relationship, the bottom, supports the view, and there is potential for expansion of the World Englishes view only if the top, the Japanese government, discontinues the use of exonormative standards and monolingual reference. The development of another glocal (Yano, 2001) variety could take place. Kirkpartick (2006) summarizes the issue well: for those who study in their home countries the native speaker model is impossible to achieve, and that the governing bodies need to recognize this.

6. Conclusion

The reality of globalization challenges us to think of countries that stay devoid of external influences. Everything we see around us in daily life has a place of origin. It might be foreign or domestic. As an analogy, we can not tell a young artist how a painting should be painted. We can only give that person paint, a brush, canvas and theme. The decision how one should express art is not ours, no matter how much we want to control it. It is similar with languages. If we try stopping the spread of English on account of deviation from the norm, we take away something that is inherently belonging to the world (Gupta, 2010), and is free to express. The acrolect forms at schools and the maintenance of standard English through prescriptiveness does serve a purpose in Japanese society, it works well as a testable material, but it is not what will make the Japanese people assume that English is something free to use and therefore liberating.

In this paper, I have provided a context in which the spread of English language by one group of learners can be seen through both Global English and World Englishes paradigms. The multitude of the contexts makes the spread of English a challenging issue to look at. Every government, school and educational institution has its ideology behind its curriculum design, so for a more realistic interpretation of how the spread of English language in the world occurs a proper dissection of the background and a larger

sociocultural background built by history, political relations, economy, culture and its participants is needed.

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Appendix A

B: ...

A: Muroran's ramen is very good.

B: Really?

A: Absolutely.

B: But I have never eaten ramen.

A: No problem.

B: **That was good**.

...

A: My favorite ramen is curry ramen.

B: I want to eat it.

A: **That was good**.

B: Would you like to eat it with me?

A: I was just thinking it.

B: Ok. Let's go together.

..

Appendix B

...

A: Where do you want to go?

B: I want to go to shopping mall.

A: I know a good place! Shall we go there?

B: Yeah. I want to go!

A: Ok. What a relief. How about tomorrow?

B: Fine. I'm looking forward to tomorrow!

A: I'm happy to hear that.

...

Appendix C

..

A: I see!! You are good at taking quizzes.

B: Yes, I am.

A: My it is enviable.

B: Did you also solve this quiz?

A: No! Let's do it together!

B: Thank you!

Appendix D

..

A: Will you have free time during the holidays?

B: Yes, I will.

A: Let's watch animation together.

B: That's great.